

Central MRS Meeting Notes
June 25, 2006
Stanley County DSS

Counties Present: Alamance, Anson*, Chatham, Davidson, Mecklenburg, Rockingham, Rowan*, Stanly*, Stokes*.

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Announcements

- MRS learning institute, August 21-23 in Craven county (New Bern). This is different than a conference where you may go to a lot of shorter workshops. This is an Institute where you will only go to a couple of workshops but they will be longer and in depth so that you can really get into each topic and learn some of the skills.
- Will be sending out information on registration as soon as possible, by end of next week hopefully (will include hotel information etc.)

Future Trainings

- 6 more sessions of MRS policy between now and December. Spaced out across the state, Holly will get info out in the next couple of weeks.
- Pre-service attendees after July 1 will get some MRS stuff. The specifics will be included in other trainings but not until January 2007.

Future Meetings

- No meeting in August because of Institute.
- Central Meeting on 25th at Forsyth Co Health Dept.
- Eastern in Sampson Co on 26th.

Evaluation

- MRS database Dear County Director. Heather talked about it, asked people to look for this on the web if these letters do not get passed down at their counties.

- Entry into MRS database will be mandatory for all assessments coming in after July 1. (New counties not required to enter until they have had training.)

Documentation – Overall, and Assessments

- There is a work group being formed around Documentation that came out of Children's Services.
- Holly asked for folks to send her templates and she showed what she had.
- Mecklenburg had a template which they passed out.
- Case name, Case number, only about half the counties here have a list in the documentation of all the members of the family (as well as the face sheet), some just on the face sheet, CR check, criminal records check, date of report.
- Some counties have a specific item for the response time. The templates have a place to indicate if the response was made in a timely manner and if children were at risk because it was not initiated on time.
- Were interviews done in an order that kept children safe.
- Holly asked is anyone really going to say that they screwed up and children were not safe??? Cindy Holman said that the purpose of these questions were to prompt the workers to explain when they did deviate from policy for the safety and best interests of the children, why they did it so that it will be clear for other people reading records and CFSR.
- Changing tracks. Some counties just have a question, others have a whole separate piece of paper.
 - Some counties use One Case and they have trouble using a template in this system and they are required to use One Case.
 - Other software systems other than One Case (goes all the way through placement)? Mecklenburg developed their own.
- Was the previous CPS file reviewed?
- A place to list family supports.
- Permission by the parents to contact collaterals.
- Asked about getting medical records. Is there a preferred way to get medical records? In a family assessment if the family says no, you must use professional judgment if the records are really necessary. If you are going to get them anyway, you should tell the family that you really feel they are necessary and you are going to get them.
- List the specific names of school and medical personnel.
- Prompts in tools are used as a teaching tool, especially in bigger counties that have new workers all the time. That way if the supervisor forgets to tell something, the tool will cover it.
- Do most counties tell a story or have specific items in order (chronological or not)?
 - Some counties do things as they happen
 - Some more tell a story.

- Do people have a prompt in there to document if parents were asked if they wanted to be there for collaterals and if they do not, indicate why not.
- Counties that have standard templates – how have you done on their reviews?
 - Usually the tools grow out of the reviews. When you do poorly on a review, a tool is developed to help them do better.
 - Mecklenburg's tool was the most recent of several tools, and they took a lot of the language in the template from the audit tool. In addition they did fairly well on their last review.
 - However, keep in mind that Yadkin recently got a 100% on their review and they only do a face sheet and a running narrative.
 - The tool itself will not make or break your review, it depends on a lot of things, how much importance is placed on documentation, how often cases are reviewed internally, but a tool can help you.
- Beaufort County has purchased Tablet PC's and use them directly in the field so that you don't have to retype documentation when you get back. You can write on it and it translates your handwriting into typewritten text. (Can contact them for info.)
- Most people have workers that take notes in the field (which are sometimes sketchy) and then when they come back to the office at some point they type it up. Patrick's question is how do you remember to do everything, especially if you are a new worker??
 - People felt that they lose good information a lot of the time if they are just taking scratchy notes and not truly documenting in the field.
- One county is starting to implement one day a week for documentation. It is really hard to truly protect the worker's time and not have them be paged, called etc. Supervisors have to follow up and make sure that the workers actually produced the work they were supposed to during the protected time.

Case Planning/Case Management Documentation

- Do folks have any kind of template for CP/CM?
 - Date, who was there, how does the meeting apply to the case plan. Barriers, tasks to follow up on.
- What other things would you want to see in CP/CM documentation?
 - How did you engage the family in the case plan?
- Holly got a template for a CFT.
 - Included who was present, issues discussed, services provided, services needed, recommendations.
- If you are not using a form, how do you document a CFT? (How can someone looking at the record tell if a meeting was a CFT or not?)
 - Not a form, but the facilitators type up something and it is put in the record, behind the narrative. There is a specific format they use. All this county's meetings have facilitators. Include a contingency plan. If the Action plan does not work, have a plan B, and then an emergency plan if necessary. Will email to Holly.

- Would like to see some ideas that came from the client to show that they were active participants.
- Suggestion was that if you are updating the case plan use a different color ink, you can update right on the form (can also use a different color for the font if its electronic.)
- Be sure to give a purpose to every meeting. Clients do not want to hang out with their SW. As workers, it is logical for each meeting to have a purpose, but the state requires certain frequencies of meetings, and sometimes policy dictates a visit but the SW does not see that there is a purpose, so the meeting seems sort of useless. As a worker, take some time beforehand and think about what you really need to talk about. Are there issues on the case plan that the family is having trouble with? Figure out a true purpose for the meeting before you go out.
- This is what leads to “stuck” cases. Examine these cases, can they be closed out?
- Respect the time of the clients and the social workers. Either close the case and let others handle the remaining issues if they are not too severe (community partners) or step it up if the family is not addressing safety issues.

Foster Care Documentation

- Did not get any templates re: Foster Care dictation.
- Mecklenburg does use a template for Foster Care. There aren't really any prompts, but there are some things that they address: date, time, who was there, category of contact (home visit, office visit, phone call), who was there, barriers to permanency, how the child contributed.
- Rowan does something similar.
- Because Foster Care is only reviewed every 6 months it gets sloppy and the Structured Decision making tool does not stay tied into the case plan.
- Foster Care cases also get “stuck” – need to determine if a plan needs to be changed after a certain point.
- Talked about the need to educate members of the judicial system. This is an ongoing process, like with any other community partner. Don't try to educate them while you are in the courtroom hearing a case. If you see them on another committee, go to church with them, have them in for lunch or something. Don't try to get in the middle of their already hectic court schedule and “sell” them then. Use the same strategies with the judges that you do with families.

Foster Care Policy Clarification

Permanency Planning (P-PAT) versus CFT – can they be combined??

- Permanency Planning Meetings – federally required, and certain people are required to be there.
- CFTs are a family centered meeting.

- The people that are probably different are the GAL, and the community person (we have not gotten a real clear definition of who the community person has to be). If the family is comfortable with the people who are required to be at the P-PAT being at their CFT, you can combine the two.
- If the family refuses to have someone at the CFT that is required to be at the P-PAT, (for example the GALs) you will have to have 2 different meetings.
 - Perhaps you may suggest to the family meet right afterward, since most of the people are the same.
 - Or, tell the family that by law you will have to share information with the GAL anyway, and that person will be heard in court, they might reconsider having that person at their CFT.
- Make your voice heard. Since we go to court every 3 months, if you don't think we need P-PATs lobby for this. However, this is federal legislation so we don't know how often other states are going to court. Also consider that other agencies (such as Prevent Child Abuse) are lobbying agencies and they can lobby to federal legislators.

Shared Parenting vs CFT

- Shared Parenting Meeting – must be held within 7 days of child being placed. Between the biological and foster parents. The purpose is not case planning, but to talk about how to co-parent the child while they are in care.
- One of the key points of Shared Parenting, is that it is required within the first 7 days, but should be ongoing throughout the time the child is in foster care. The birth parents want to know from the people who have daily contact with their child how their child is doing and what is going on in their life.
- The 7 day meeting just starts the process, it is not the entire process. How the process of Shared Parenting develops after that is up to the 2 sets of parents, not DSS.
- Suggestions for policy around frequency of Shared Parenting, and parameters (boundaries) of Shared Parenting. Foster parents need to know that there is a court order regarding visitation etc, and Foster parents can't just decide to meet with the biological parents whenever they want, but that doesn't mean they can't talk on the phone, or allow children to.
- Must recognize that Shared Parenting is a continuum. Some sets of parents will work better together, some will connect, and some will hate each other, but they can still do Shared Parenting. All cases won't have the same level of interaction between the Foster and Biological parents and that is not a bad thing. Some parents just share logbooks and things like that because there are reasons that there is little or no face to face contact.
- Many Foster Parents have been doing this all along, and there are others that still refuse to do it. Foster Parents are on a continuum as well.

- Some counties feel the 7 day meeting is overwhelming, there is so much else to do right then, to sell the Foster Parent on the meeting right then is a lot. It would be much easier to wait a week or two when the legal paperwork around taking custody has died down social workers are more able to set a positive stage for the initial Shared Parenting Meeting.
- Would like some flexibility on how often CFTs are held. In Mecklenburg they have such a high case volume, they are meeting with the same people (treatment teams) and don't think they should have a second meeting.
 - Holly and Patrick pointed out, that this is a CFT if the parents had the people they wanted to come. Maybe they wanted to add Grandma. Document the meeting as "Treatment Team/CFT" meeting. You might have to go outside the box a little to make sure that you can get all the parents support people there. (Have to arrange a ride for Grandma or something.)
 - Combining meetings is totally ok – just have to remember that if you are going to combine a CFT with a meeting that is agency driven, you must have the opportunity for the family's supports there and the meeting will probably run a little differently and you have to be sure to keep it family centered.
 - However, you probably can't combine a Shared Parenting meeting with another one because the purpose is so different, to co-parent, not to case plan, or meet some government mandates. However you can have Shared Parenting meetings right before or after the other meetings.
- If there is no family involved for children who are aging out, ask the child who they want there on their behalf.